

INCIDENT FACTS

REPORT #:

22MI031

REPORT DATE:

March 28, 2024

INCIDENT DATE:

March 29, 2022

WORKER:

60-year-old

INDUSTRY:

Landscaping Services

OCCUPATION:

Owner/Foreman/Tree
Trimmer

EVENT TYPE:

Fall



Oak tree where the fall occurred. Branch that was cut when the fall happened is circled.

Tree Trimmer Dies after Fall from Oak Tree

SUMMARY

A 60-year-old tree trimmer, who was also the owner of the company and the job-site foreman, was fatally injured when he fell approximately 50 feet from a live oak tree. He had more than 45 years of experience trimming trees. A climbing rope had been tied to the base of the tree and ran through a crotch approximately 70 feet above the ground. The victim was using a Petzl ZIGZAG (a mechanical Prusik device) attached to the climbing rope to ascend the tree.

While scaling the tree, he was trimming some of the smaller dead branches using a Stihl MS 201 TC chainsaw approximately 50 feet above the ground. The Stihl MS 201 TC is a specially designed lightweight arborist chainsaw designed specifically to be used while working up in the tree. There were also two co-workers on-site acting as the ground crew gathering the branches after they were cut, piling them up nearby for disposal. The tree trimmer was wearing his tool belt with tethers to the chainsaw, an extendable pole saw, and a safety strap as well as wearing a safety helmet with ear protection and eye protection.

At the time of the incident, the tree trimmer was using one hand to hold the dead branch he was cutting and the other hand to operate the chainsaw. It is suspected he finished his cut through the branch and the chainsaw continued to run, unintentionally cutting the climbing rope above the mechanical Prusik device causing him to fall to the ground in a prone position. It is believed his climbing rope was cut on the ascending run (the run from the base of the tree up to the crotch) and not the descending run that would have been closest to him. It is not believed the safety strap was in use at the time of the incident. Police and emergency medical services arrived, and he was pronounced dead at the scene.



Climbing rope where it had been unintentionally cut.

REQUIREMENTS

Employers must:

- Ensure that all tree trimming operations are conducted in accordance with [MIOSHA General Industry Safety Standard Part 53. Tree Trimming and Removal](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

MIFACE investigators concluded that, to help prevent similar occurrences:

- Tree removal companies should have an applicable written safety program based upon American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Z133 and other applicable standards and regulations.
- When operating a chainsaw in a tree, the operator should:
 - Hold the saw with both hands and never cut above the shoulders.
 - Use 2 points of attachment to the tree.

CITATIONS

No citations were issued by the MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division due to the death of the business owner and the company no longer being in business.

[MIFACE](#) (Michigan Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation), Michigan State University (MSU) Occupational & Environmental Medicine, 909 Fee Road, 117 West Fee Hall, East Lansing, Michigan 48824-1315.

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